

# Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan

2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 2017

Steve Chaplin, TNC

Greg Hoch, DNR

for the Prairie Plan Working Group



## Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan

A habitat plan for native prairie, grassland, and wetlands in the Prairie Region of western Minnesota

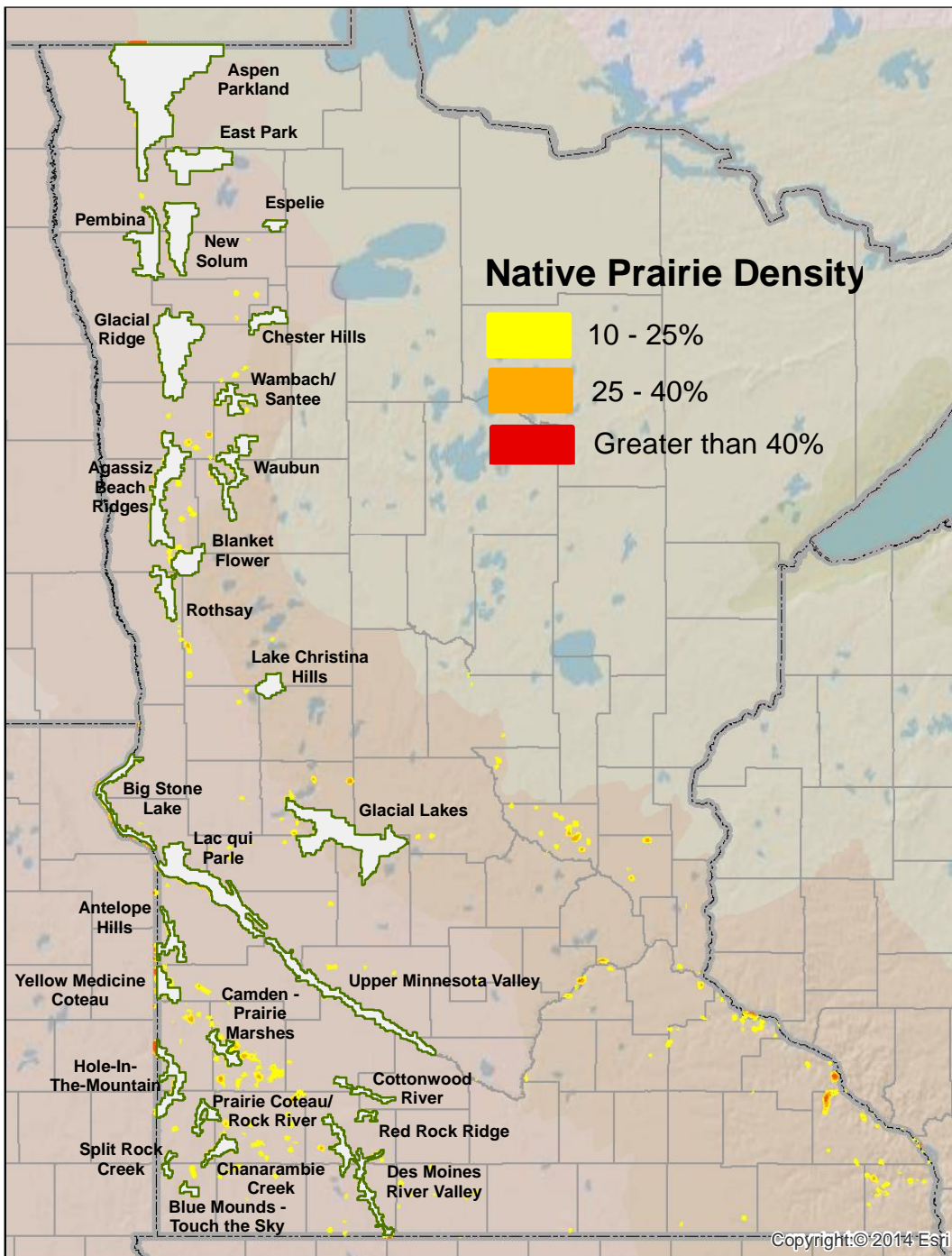
2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2017

Blazing Star at Glacial Lakes State Park © Allison Mickelson\Greater Good Photography



# Prairie Core Areas

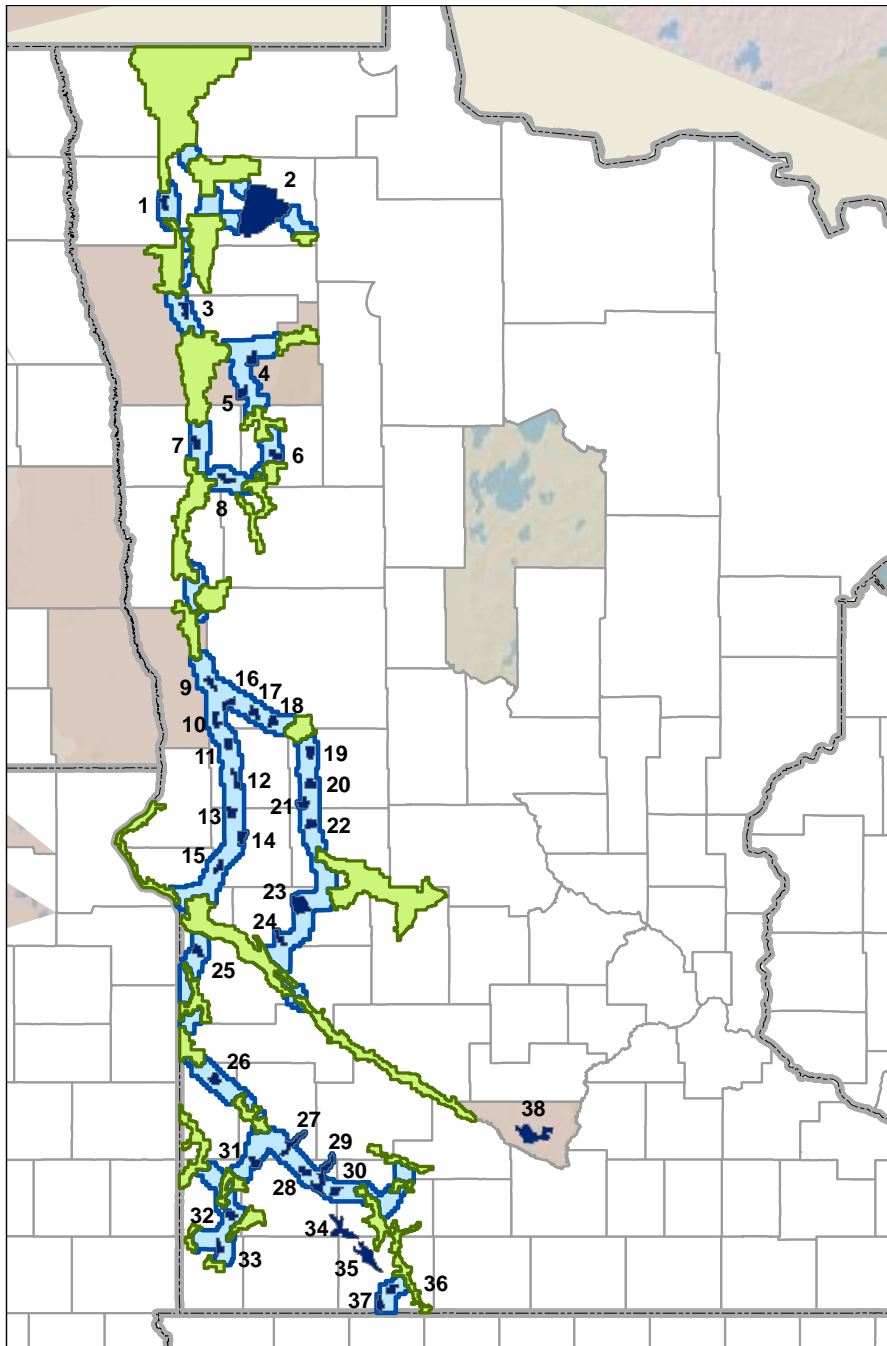
- 28 Core Areas, 2 million acres
- 3 new, 2 deleted, 14 combined into 6
- All boundaries revised to better capture conservation landscape
- Captures 77% of native prairie
- **Goal:** 40% grassland, 20% wetland, 40% agriculture and other
- **Desired Outcome:** Functioning Prairie Systems



Hole in the Mountain Prairie © Justin Meissen



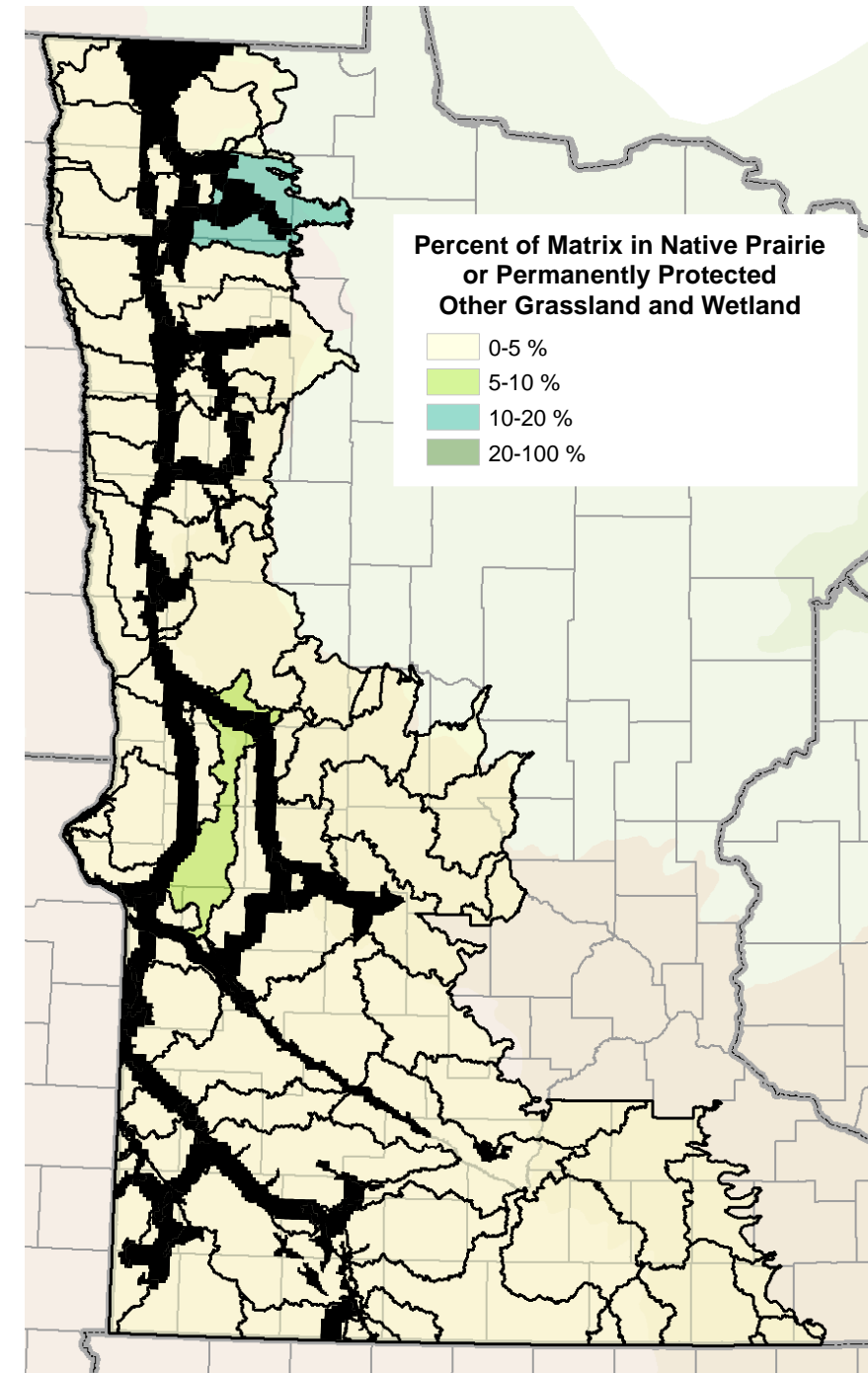
# Corridors and Strategic Habitat Complexes



- Six new corridors provide better pathways for dispersal and open a connection to prairie areas in Iowa (2.0 million acres total)
- Corridor complexes were redesigned, still 6,000 acres in size and 6 miles apart
- Added 4 wetland complexes in iconic MN areas: Swan Lake, Heron Lake, Talcot Lake, and Agassiz NWR
- **Goal:** 40% grassland, 20% wetland in SHC, 10% of each section in general corridors
- **Desired Outcome:** Dispersal of prairie species along corridors ensuring viability of populations in core areas

# Agricultural Matrix

- 20.8 Million Acres
- 53 Major Watersheds
- **Goal:** Maintain at least 10% of each major watershed in grassland or wetland, protect 5% through conservation easement or fee purchase (recognizing the conservation role of private grazing lands)
- **Desired Outcome:**  
A more sustainable agricultural landscape with enhanced wildlife populations, a healthy grazing economy, improve water quality, and more water retention



# Conservation in an Agricultural Context

- Maintain a robust grazing economy that utilizes both private and public lands
- “Well-managed, private, working lands contribute to the viability of grassland and wetland systems and private income generated from grasslands can be the single largest driving force for grassland conservation.”
- **Key Question:** Under what conditions can grass-based economic uses provide a superior return on labor and investment to sustain rural families and communities?





# Aquatic Habitat and Water Quality Conservation

**In core areas:** Identify, protect, restore, and management the best examples of:

- Headwater streams, stream orders 1-2
- Mid-order streams, stream orders 3-5
- Large, Shallow lakes (>50 acres, < 15 feet deep)
- Large, Deep lakes (> 50 acres, >15 feet deep)
- Small lakes (<50 acres)
- Existing Permanent wetlands
- Existing Temporary and seasonal wetlands
- Fens and other special features

**In corridors, strategic habitat complexes, and the ag matrix:** undertake local projects to: create grassland/wetland complexes, increase stream buffers, expand perennial cover, and undertake more wetland restoration







# People and Projects

TNC Prairie Recovery Project

DNR Roving Crews

Detroit Lakes Seed Exchange

Local Technical Teams

Coordinate conservation efforts

More efficient and more effective





# Rush Lake Grazing Project

Southeast Mahanomen County

1375 acres fenced

80 ac County

150 ac WPA

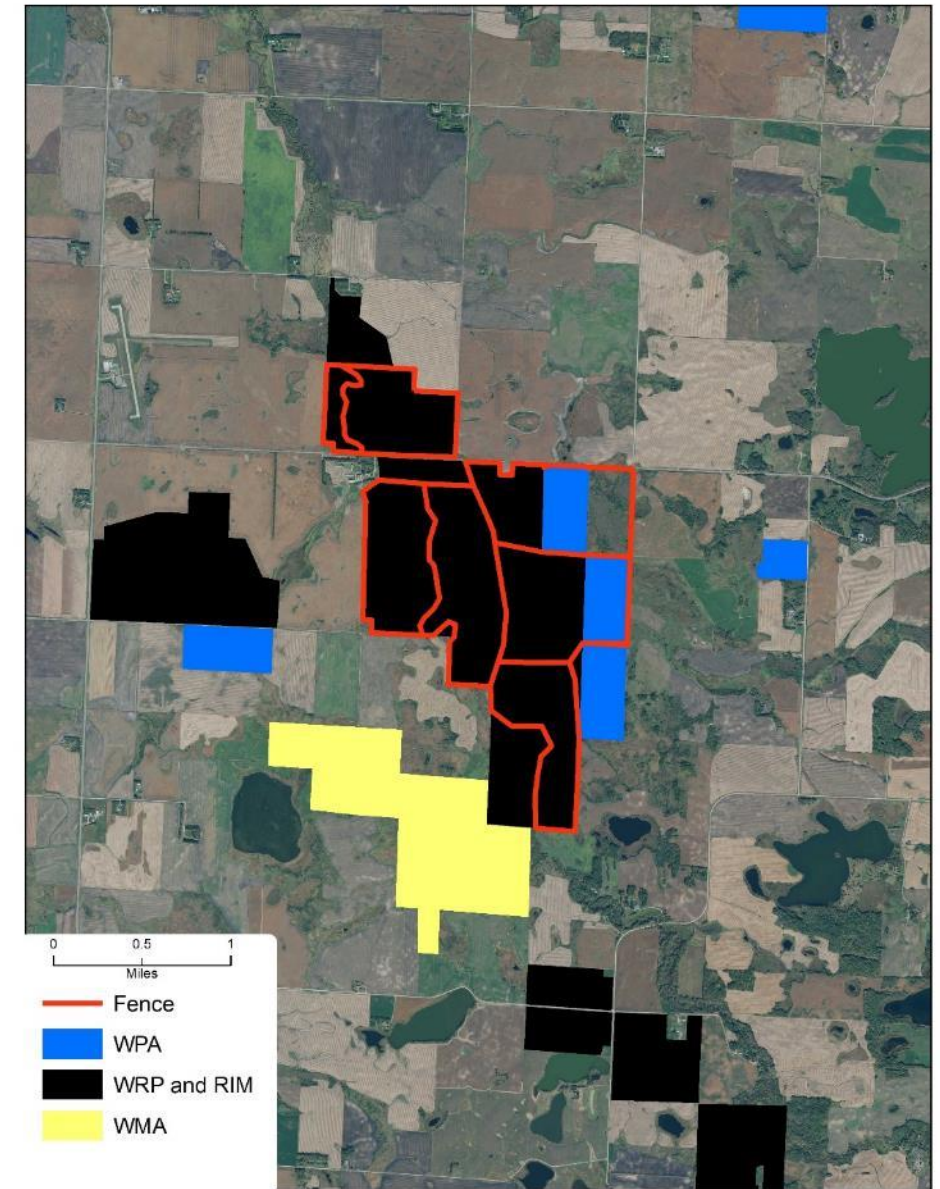
1138 ac RIM

Funded by WLI, TNC-PRP, in-kind labor

7 paddocks with potential for more to rotate cattle through

Preliminary veg survey by contractors

Partners: TNC, DU, County, NRCS, FWS, BWSR, DNR





# Hatchet Lake WPA/Jeral WMA/Jarvis WPA Complex

north-central Clay County

3 public lands parcels and a large RIM easement

Significant amount of native prairie

Agassiz Beach Ridge landscape

*CPL grant to remove trees from WPA*

*RIM funds to remove cottonwood windbreaks on easement*

Preliminary data – anecdotal and quantitative

trumpeter swans regularly nest in the complex

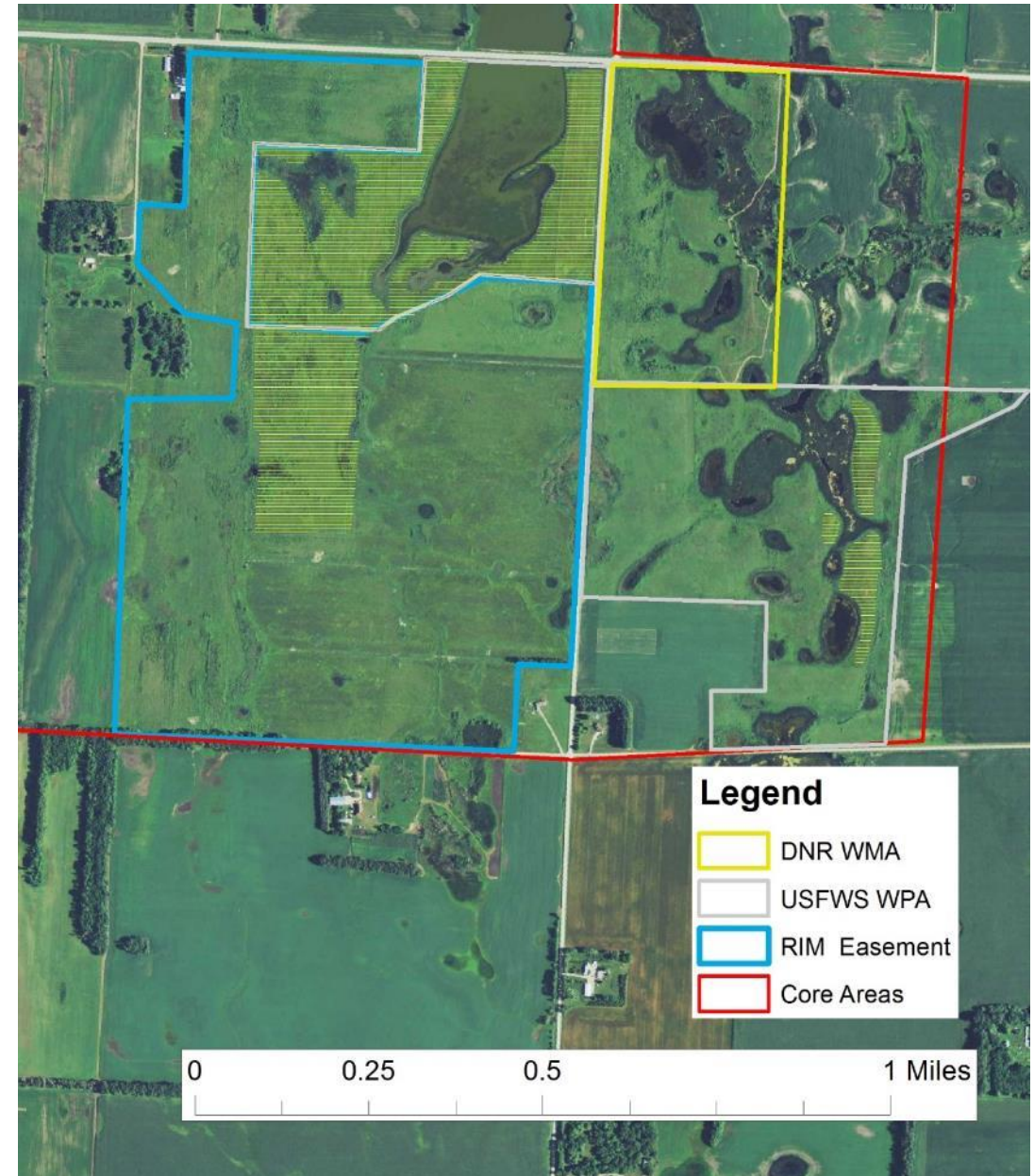
high waterfowl and pheasant numbers

Surveyed native plant diversity at 3 sites in complex

Following year

first prairie chickens seen on complex

American avocets seen on WPA







## **Santee Prairie SNA and Wambach WMA (Mahnomen County)**

Prescribed fire on native prairie

Stimulated flowering and seed production

Harvested (local ecotype) seed for nearby restorations





# Legacy Impact MN Prairie Plan

